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INCOMING TELEGRAM *Department of State*

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INFO RUMTBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [signature] DATE 10/5/82
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON (S)
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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

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LIMDIS

1. EMBOFF DISCUSSED POLITICAL SITUATION WITH SOUTHERN LAY BUDDHIST LEADER MAI THO TRUYEN MAY 20. TRUYEN CONFIRMED THAT HE HAD BEEN APPROACHED BY SEVERAL GROUPS WHICH WANT HIM TO RUN FOR VICE PRESIDENT. (HE DECLINED TO SAY WHICH CANDIDATES

ARE INTERESTED IN HIM AS A RUNNING MATE, BUT WE KNOW FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT TRAN VAN HUONG IS AMONG THEM.) TRUYEN SAID THAT HE HAS NOT YET MADE UP HIS MIND IF HE WILL RUN, BUT IT WAS CLEAR FROM HIS CONVERSATION THAT HE IS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING BECOMING A CANDIDATE.

2. TRUYEN SAID THAT HE HAS STAYED OUT OF POLITICS AND HAS NO PERSONAL AMBITIONS. HOWEVER HE WILL DO WHATEVER HE CAN TO HELP BRING PEACE. IF A CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT IS REQUIRED FOR NEGOTIATIONS AND HE CAN HELP TO SET UP SUCH A GOVERNMENT, HE IS WILLING TO DO HIS DUTY. HE ADDED THAT HE MEANT AN "HONORABLE PEACE, NOT A FALSE PEACE." LATER IN THE CONVERSATION TRUYEN OBSERVED THAT HE WANTS TO LOOK OVER THE ELECTORAL LAW AFTER IT IS PROMULGATED, CONSIDER THE NATURE OF THE OPPOSITION, AND ESTIMATE THE MEANS AT HIS DISPOSAL BEFORE HE DECIDES WHETHER OR NOT HE SHOULD BE A CANDIDATE.

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3. WHILE DECLINING TO DISCUSS THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES, TRUYEN WAS EXTREMELY CRITICAL OF THE MILITARY. HE DEPLORED THEIR CORRUPTION, HIGH LIVING, AND THE DECLINE OF MORALS UNDER THEIR REGIME. WHEN EMBOFF SUGGESTED THAT THE FUTURE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE A CIVILIAN-MILITARY PARTNERSHIP, TRUYEN SAID WITH SOME HEAT THAT THE MILITARY MUST STICK TO THIER TRADE, WHICH IS FIGHTING. HE REJECTED EMPHATICALLY THE IDEA THAT MILITARY MEN HAVE THE TALENT OR EXPERIENCE TO SERVE AS A GOVERNMENT MINISTER OR EVEN AS A PROVINCE CHIEF, MUCH LESS AS PRIME MINISTER OR CHIEF OF STATE. ASKED IF A PURELY CIVILIAN REGIME WOULD NOT RUN THE RISK OF A COUP, HE SAID THAT THE MILITARY WOULD NOT DARE MOUNT A COUP AGAINST AN ELECTED GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD REPRESENT THE WHOLE PEOPLE. HE RESERVED HIS HARSHEST CRITICISM FOR KY, REFERRED TO THIEU ONLY AS "THAT FELLOW." AT ONE POINT HE COMMENTED AT LENGTH ON DIEMS GOOD QUALITIES.

4. TRUYEN CLAIMED THAT MANY DELEGATIONS HAVE URGED HIM TO RUN, INCLUDING CAO DAI AND CATHOLIC GROUPS AS WELL AS BUDDHIST FACTIONS. HE ALSO SAID THAT SIXTY PERCENT OF THE VAN HANH (BUDDHIST UNIVERSITY) STUDENTS WANT HIM TO RUN. HE EXPLAINED HIS POPULARITY IN TERMS OF HIS "SYMBOLIC" APPEAL. HE HAS NO STAINS FROM THE PAST, HE IS 63 AND A VEGETARIAN, AND IS KNOWN TO WANT NEITHER MONEY NOR POWER.

5. SPEAKING OF THE PROPER US ROLE, TRUYEN SAID THAT "DIRECT US INTERFERENCE" COULD NOT BE TOLERATED, BUT THAT INDIRECT US INFLUENCE SHOULD BE APPLIED TO MAKE SURE THAT THE ELECTION IS HONEST AND THAT ALL CANDIDATES HAVE EQUAL FACILITIES. HE PUT GREAT EMPHASIS ON THE NEED FOR A RUN-OFF ELECTION IN CASE THE WINNER FAILED TO GET AT LEAST FIFTY PERCENT OF THE VOTE.

6. COMMENT:

A. TRUYEN IS A RESPECTED SOUTHERN BUDDHIST LEADER BUT HE DOES NOT HAVE WIDE APPEAL AND HE IS NOT IN GOOD HEALTH. (HE SUFFERS FROM DIABETES.) HE WOULD PROBABLY NOT BRING MUCH STRENGTH TO HUONGS TICKET, PARTICULARLY AS BOTH MEN ARE SOUTHERNERS. HIS VIEWS ON THE MILITARY INDICATE THAT HE ALSO WOULD NOT BE HELPFUL TO HUONG IN WINNING MILITARY SUPPORT AND COOPERATION AFTER THE ELECTION.

B. TRUYEN'S COMMENT ON DIEM'S VIRTUES IS IRONIC IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT HE WAS ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL LEADERS OF THE 1963 "STRUGGLE" WHICH PROVIDED THE EMOTIONAL CLIMATE AND PRETEXT FOR THE MILITARY OVERTHROW OF THE DIEM REGIME.
GP-3 BUNKER

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